

# *Genetta genetta* - Common Genet



By Barbara Lundrigan and Molly Conley

## **Habitat**

Common genets prefer drier areas than other members of the genus. They prefer forests, as they are excellent and agile climbers.

- Terrestrial Biomes: savanna or grassland; forest; scrub forest

## **Physical Description**

Genets are long, lean carnivores with a tail usually at least as long as the body. They appear cat-like, except for their longer faces. They are extremely flexible and can enter very small spaces.

- Mass: 1 to 3 kg (2.20 to 6.61 lb)

## **Behavior**

Genets are primarily solitary animals, though male and female ranges may overlap. Individuals of the same sex have exclusive territories. They are nocturnal and only rarely appear during the day, though they are sometimes reported as foraging at twilight.

They are stealth hunters, much like the cats and kill with a quick bite to the neck. Their sharp claws both allow them to pin prey and to be excellent climbers.

## **Food Habits**

Genets are carnivorous and eat most small animals that they can catch, such as rats, mice, insects, small reptiles, and birds.

## **Economic Importance for Humans**

Genets help keep vermin populations down, and since they often live on the edges of a human community, this helps alleviate pest problems with crops.

Genets occasionally consume game birds and poultry, but hardly do enough damage to be considered a threat to either.

# *Crocuta crocuta* - Spotted Hyena

By Jason Law



## **Habitat**

*Crocuta crocuta* is common in many types of open, dry habitat including semi-desert, savannah, acacia bush, and mountainous forest. (Hofer, 2002; Kingdon, 1977; Mills and Hes, 1997; Nowak, 1999)

- Habitat Regions: tropical; terrestrial
- Terrestrial Biomes: desert or dune; savanna or grassland; forest; scrub forest; mountains

## **Physical Description**

- Mass: 45 to 80 kg; 99.12 to 176.21 lb
- Length: 95 to 150 cm; 37.40 to 59.06 in

## **Food Habits**

Hyaenas have a reputation for being mostly scavengers, however, this is not accurate. A study in the Kalahari found that 70 % of the diet was composed of direct kills. In the Serengeti and Ngorongoro crater, Tanzania, *C. crocuta* was observed eating a wide variety of items including wildebeest, zebra, Thompson's gazelle, Grant's gazelle, topi, kongoni, waterbuck, eland, Cape buffalo, impala, Warthog, hare, springhare, ostrich eggs, bat-eared fox, golden jackal, porcupine, puff adder, domestic animals, lion, other hyaenas, termites, and afterbirth. Fecal analysis in these same two areas revealed that about 80 % of the samples contained wildebeest, zebra, and various gazelle species. (Di Silvestre, et al., 2000; Kruuk, 1972)

- Primary Diet: carnivore (eats terrestrial vertebrates); scavenger
- Animal Foods: birds; mammals; fish; eggs; carrion

## **Predation**

There are several species which may kill them. In one study 13 of 24 hyaena carcasses found were killed by lions. Hyaenas and lions compete directly for food and often scavenge each other's kills. This competition often leads to antagonistic encounters that may result in death. In addition, humans often kill hyaenas in numerous ways. Through the early 1960's, hyaenas were shot on sight in numerous parks and game reserves in East Africa. (Eltringham, 1979; Kruuk, 1972)

- Known Predators: lions; humans

# ***Dendroaspis polylepis* - Black Mamba**



By Randy Schott

## **Habitat**

*Dendroaspis polylepis* individuals prefer wooded savannah, rocky hills, or riverine forests with rocks or downed trees that provide cover. (Marais, 1992; Spawls and Branch, 1995)

- Habitat Regions: tropical; terrestrial
- Terrestrial Biomes: savanna or grassland; forest
- Average length: 2.2-2.7 m

## **Behavior**

*Dendroaspis polylepis* are shy and secretive. They are diurnal, usually active from a few hours after sunrise until about an hour before dusk. Black mambas are adept at climbing trees and do so very quickly. (Branch, 1988; FitzSimons, 1970; Marais, 1985; Marais, 1992; Spawls and Branch, 1995)

- Key Behaviors: arboreal; terricolous; diurnal; sedentary; solitary; territorial

## **Food Habits**

Black mambas feed mostly on small mammals, including rodents, squirrels, and dassies or hyraxes. They also take birds occasionally (Branch, 1988; FitzSimons, 1970; Marais, 1985; Marais, 1992)

## **Predation**

- Known Predators
  - Humans; diurnal birds of prey; crocodiles; large frogs; mongooses; monitors; foxes and jackals

They are important in controlling rodent populations. (FitzSimons, 1970)

*Dendroaspis polylepis* is one of the most dangerous snakes in the world. Since it will sometimes take refuge in a populated area, such as the roof of a house or a farm pumphouse, encounters with humans are relatively frequent, and in rural areas, often fatal. (FitzSimons, 1970; Marais, 1992; Spawls and Branch, 1995)

# *Ceratotherium simum* - White Rhinoceros

By Eric J. Ellis



## **Habitat**

Primarily open woodland with nearby open grassland, thick brush, and water. White rhinos prefer flat lands and can occasionally be found in swampy regions.

- Terrestrial Biomes: savanna or grassland; chaparral; forest

## **Physical Description**

- Mass: 1440 to 3600 kg (3171.81 to 7929.52 lb)

## **Behavior**

White rhinos are believed to have the most complex behavior of all the rhinoceroses. Home ranges vary in size, depending on resources and region, from .75-8 sq. km. Rhinos spend almost their entire lives within their home range.

## **Food Habits**

White rhinos are grazers, feeding on grasses that they crop with their wide front lip. Their short legs, long head reaching almost to the ground, and wide mouth are used in combination with a side to side head movement to eat massive quantities of grass.

## **Economic Importance for Humans**

Although not beneficial, white rhino horns are valued at thousands of dollars on the black market. The white rhino also is a very large draw at zoos across the world and for tourists who come to many poor African countries just to get a glimpse to this animal.

# ***Loxodonta africana* - African Bush Elephant**

By Lindsay Norwood



## **Habitat**

The habitats occupied by African elephants vary because they can survive long periods of time without water; they occupy deserts, forests, savannas, river valleys and marshes.

- Other Habitat Features: agricultural

## **Physical Description**

African elephants are the heaviest land animal, and the second tallest in the Animal Kingdom. They are a sexually dimorphic species; males appear larger than females. The height of a bull at his shoulder is about twelve feet (about 3.75 m), when the female's height is nine feet (about 3 m).

## **Behavior**

African elephants wander day or night in non-territorial herds that can reach 200 elephants, even one thousand during the rains.

African elephants are typically active during the day but herds in areas with high levels of human activity often become primarily nocturnal. (Estes, 1999; CITES, 2001; Moss, 2001; Jackson, 1990)

## **Food Habits**

During the rainy seasons elephants eat grass and herbs like papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*) and cat tails (*Typha augustifolia*). During dry seasons in the savannah they eat leaves collected from thorny trees and bushes. Swamps are a last resort for food because swamp vegetation contains little nutrition. However, dying elephants are often found in these areas because this vegetation is softer and older elephants are often missing teeth. (Estes, 1999; Moss, 1988)

- Primary Diet: leaves; roots and tubers; wood, bark, or stems; fruit

## **Predation**

Humans are the only predators to adult elephants but calves are susceptible to be snatched away by lions and hyenas.

Elephant foraging and wandering sometimes result in crop damage and damage to villages. (Eltringam, et al., August, 1992; Estes, 1999; Jackson, 1990)